

Robson et al.
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This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Amended) A method for the agglomeration of alumina particles, the method characterized by the steps of:
 - (a) adding a quantity of pseudo-boehmite to a plurality of alumina particles, thereby to form a mixture, wherein the quantity of pseudo-boehmite is between about 0.8 wt. % and 5 wt. %, based on weight of the mixture, and
 - (b) spray drying the mixture to produce agglomerated granules.
2. (Original) A method according to claim 1 characterized in that the pseudo-boehmite is added as an aqueous suspension.
3. (Original) A method according to claim 2 characterized in that the aqueous suspension of pseudo-boehmite is formed at a temperature between about 15 and 100°C.
4. (Original) A method according to claim 2 [or 3] characterized in that the aqueous suspension of pseudo-boehmite is formed at a temperature above about 80°C.
5. (Original) A method according to claim 2 characterized in that the aqueous suspension of pseudo-boehmite is formed at a temperature above about 85°C.
6. (Original) A method according to [any of] claims 2 to 5 characterized in that a quantity of acid is added to the aqueous suspension of pseudo-boehmite such that the pH of the suspension is between about 2 and 6.
7. (Original) A method according to claim [6] 2 characterized in that a quantity of acid is added to the aqueous suspension of pseudo-boehmite such that the pH of the suspension is approximately 3.
8. (Amended) A method according to claim 2 characterized in that a quantity of monoprotic acid is added to the aqueous suspension of pseudo-boehmite such that the pH of the suspension is between about 2 and 6 ~~claim 6 or 7 characterized in that the acid is monoprotic.~~
9. (Amended) A method according to claim 2 characterized in that a quantity of acetic acid is added to the aqueous suspension of pseudo-boehmite such that the pH of the suspension is between about 2 and 6 ~~A method according to claim 8 characterized in that the acid is acetic acid.~~

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10. (Original) A method according to [any of the preceding claims] claim 1 characterized in that, before the step of adding a quantity of pseudo-boehmite to the alumina particles, the alumina particles are comminuted to a D_{50} of less than 12 μm .

11. (Amended) A method according to claim 1 characterized in that, before the step of adding a quantity of pseudo-boehmite to the alumina particles, A method according to claim 10 characterized in that the alumina particles are comminuted to a D_{50} of less than about 9 μm .

12. (Amended) A method according to claim 1 characterized in that, before the step of adding a quantity of pseudo-boehmite to the alumina particles A method according to claim 11 characterized in that before step (a), the alumina particles are comminuted to a D_{50} of about 5 μm .

13. (Original) A method according to [any one of the preceding] claim[s] 1 characterized in that a quantity of water is added to the alumina particles to form a slurry, the particles in the slurry then being subjected to grinding.

14. (Original) A method according to [any one of] claim[s] 1 [to 12] characterized in that the alumina particles are subjected to dry grinding before a quantity of water is added to form a slurry.

15. (Original) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that the quantity of water is provided by way of an aqueous suspension of pseudo-boehmite.

16. (Amended) A method according to ~~any one of~~ claims 13 to 15 characterized in that the slurry is of high density.

17. (New) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that the slurry is of high density.

~~17-18.~~ (Amended) A method according to claim ~~16~~ 13 characterized in that the slurry comprises at least about 50% solids.

19. (New) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that the slurry comprises at least about 50% solids.

~~18~~ 20. (Amended) A method according to claim ~~16~~ 13 characterized in that the slurry comprises between about 40 and 60% solids.

21. (New) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that the slurry comprises between about 40 and 60% solids.

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19 ~~22~~. (Amended) A method according to any one of claims 13 to ~~18~~ characterized in that a viscosity modifier is added to the slurry.

~~23~~. (New) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that a viscosity modifier is added to the slurry.

~~20~~ ~~24~~. (Amended) A method according to claim 13 characterized in that a viscosity modifier is added to the slurry, A method according to claim 19 characterized in that the viscosity modifier contains containing one or more of acetic acid, citric acid or a polyacrylate.

~~25~~. (New) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that a viscosity modifier is added to the slurry, the viscosity modifier containing one or more of acetic acid, citric acid or polyacrylate.

~~24~~ ~~26~~. (Amended) A method according to claim 13 characterized in that a viscosity modifier is added to the slurry A method according to claim 19 characterized in that the viscosity modifier is being added such that the viscosity of the slurry is less than about 4 cp.

~~27~~. (New) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that a viscosity modifier is added to the slurry, the viscosity modifier being added such that the viscosity of the slurry is less than about 4 cp.

~~22~~ ~~28~~. (Amended) A method according to any one of claims ~~19 to 21~~ ~~13~~ characterized in that the viscosity modifier is acetic acid.

~~29~~. (New) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that the viscosity modifier is acetic acid.

~~23~~ ~~30~~. (Amended) A method according to claim 13 characterized in that the viscosity modifier is acetic acid, A method according to claim 22 characterized in that sufficient acetic acid is being introduced such that the concentration of the acetic acid in the slurry is between about 0.2 and 1.5% by weight of the alumina particles.

~~31~~. (New) A method according to claim 14 characterized in that the viscosity modifier is acetic acid, sufficient acetic acid being introduced such that the concentration of the acetic acid in the slurry is between about 0.2 and 1.5% by weight of the alumina particles.

~~24~~ ~~32~~. (Amended) A method according to any one of the preceding claims ~~1~~ characterized in that before the quantity of pseudo-boehmite is added to the alumina particles, the method comprises the additional steps of neutralizing, dewatering and washing the alumina particles.

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~~25~~33. (Amended) A method according to claim ~~24~~ 32 characterized in that dewatering is achieved by way of filtration.

~~26~~34. (Amended) A method according to claim ~~24~~ 32 characterized in that dewatering is achieved by way of centrifugation.

~~27~~35. (Amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 24 to 26~~ 32 characterized in that carbon dioxide neutralizes the alumina particles.

~~28~~36. (Amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 24 to 27~~ 32 characterized in that the step of neutralizing, dewatering and washing the alumina particles is carried out before grinding the alumina particles.

~~29~~37. (Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims 1~~ characterized by the step of heating the agglomerated granules.

~~30~~38. (Amended) A method according to claim ~~29~~ 37 characterized in that the agglomerated particles are dehydroxylated by heating to approximately 300°C.

~~31~~39. (Amended) A method according to claim ~~29~~ 37 characterized in that the agglomerated granules are calcined above 500°C.

32. (Cancel)

~~33~~40. (Amended) A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims 1~~ wherein the agglomerated granules have a D₅₀ in the range of about 150 to 300 µm.

~~34~~41. (Amended) Agglomerated granules produced by the method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 33~~ 40.